TIMES COLONIST

Outreach, trust and housing: How Our Place Society supports people on the path to stability

Through daily outreach and one-on-one support, Our Place Society is helping people facing homelessness navigate the barriers standing between crisis and stability



Our Place Society's Home Team provides compassionate outreach and support, helping people experiencing homelessness take steps toward greater stability, connection and a place to call home. Photo via Our Place Society

Every journey begins somewhere.

For people experiencing homelessness in Victoria, that first step can be as simple as someone showing up, learning their name and returning the next day.

At Our Place Society, that is often where the work of the Home Team begins.

Formerly known as the Dandelion Street Outreach Team, the Home Team's new name reflects its broader purpose: helping people move from homelessness toward greater safety, housing and long-term stability.

Every morning at 7 a.m., while much of Victoria is still waking up, Daniel and his colleagues are already walking the city streets.

They begin on Pandora Avenue, moving block by block and checking in with people they know by name. Some are packing up after a night outdoors, others are preparing for another day of navigating life without stable housing.

Daniel carries a backpack filled with water, snacks, hygiene supplies, housing applications and other essentials. But the most important thing he brings cannot be packed into a bag.

Trust.

"People don't just appear on the street," Daniel says. "They have stories. They've been teachers, business owners, parents and students. They've lived full lives."

The work is both simple and complex: meet people where they are, building trust and helping identify what the next step might be.

For one person, that next step may be replacing identification or applying for income assistance. For another, it may mean finding shelter, accessing healthcare, applying for housing, connecting with addiction recovery services or visiting Our Place Society for a meal and shower.

Sometimes it starts with something even smaller.

“How are you doing today?”

For someone who has become disconnected from services, discouraged by long waitlists or accustomed to being overlooked, that question can have a significant impact.

“We can’t rush people,” Daniel says. “Trust has to come first.”

That trust is built through consistency: showing up, remembering someone’s story, following through on commitments and being there when a person is ready to take the next step.

Sometimes that process takes days. Sometimes it takes months.

When the opportunity does come, timing can be critical.

One woman Daniel recently supported had been without stable housing for six years. In her early 30s and pregnant with her first child, she had spent years moving between temporary accommodations and sleeping outdoors. She had never had a home of her own.

When a housing opportunity became available, the Home Team moved quickly to complete the necessary paperwork and advocate on her behalf.

Then came another challenge: finding her.

For several days, team members searched the area where she usually stayed. On the third day, they found her camp.

“We got to tell her she had been accepted,” Daniel recalls. “She was really excited. She was grateful just to have a roof.”

Soon, she will move into a space with a bed, a washroom and the stability she needs to begin rebuilding her life.

It is one example of what the first step along Our Place’s Pathway of Support can look like.

There is no single route through that pathway.

One person may first connect with Our Place through outreach. Another may come through the doors for a hot meal, a shower, healthcare, shelter or simply a safe place to rest.

From there, staff help connect people with the supports that meet their individual needs. Those services may include housing, addiction recovery treatment, employment assistance, cultural supports, life-skills development or a welcoming community where someone can begin to rebuild.

The pathway is rarely a straight line.

People move forward, encounter setbacks, reconnect and try again. Progress looks different for every person.

What matters is that there is another step available and that someone is there to help find it.

The Home Team often serves as the bridge between living in crisis and accessing that broader network of support. The team's work does not necessarily end when someone receives the keys to a home. Team members continue to stay connected, helping people adjust, access services and build the stability needed to remain housed.

That continuity matters.

Moving indoors is a significant milestone, but housing alone does not erase years of trauma, isolation or instability.

Lasting change is built through relationships, support and time.

For many people, Daniel and the Home Team are where that relationship with Our Place Society begins.

It may start with a conversation on a sidewalk.

With trust, persistence and the right support, that first conversation can become a first step,

With trust, persistence and the right support, that first conversation can become a first step, helping someone move from surviving toward thriving.

Help someone take that first step today through donating at ourplacesociety.com.

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Compassion and community are central to Victoria's identity and at Our Place Society that spirit comes to life every day through warm meals, safe shelter, health care, outreach, supportive housing and long-term addiction recovery. Each connection helps build the foundation for greater stability, healing and lasting change. Through trusted relationships and ongoing support, people are given the opportunity to move from surviving to thriving, one step at a time.

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